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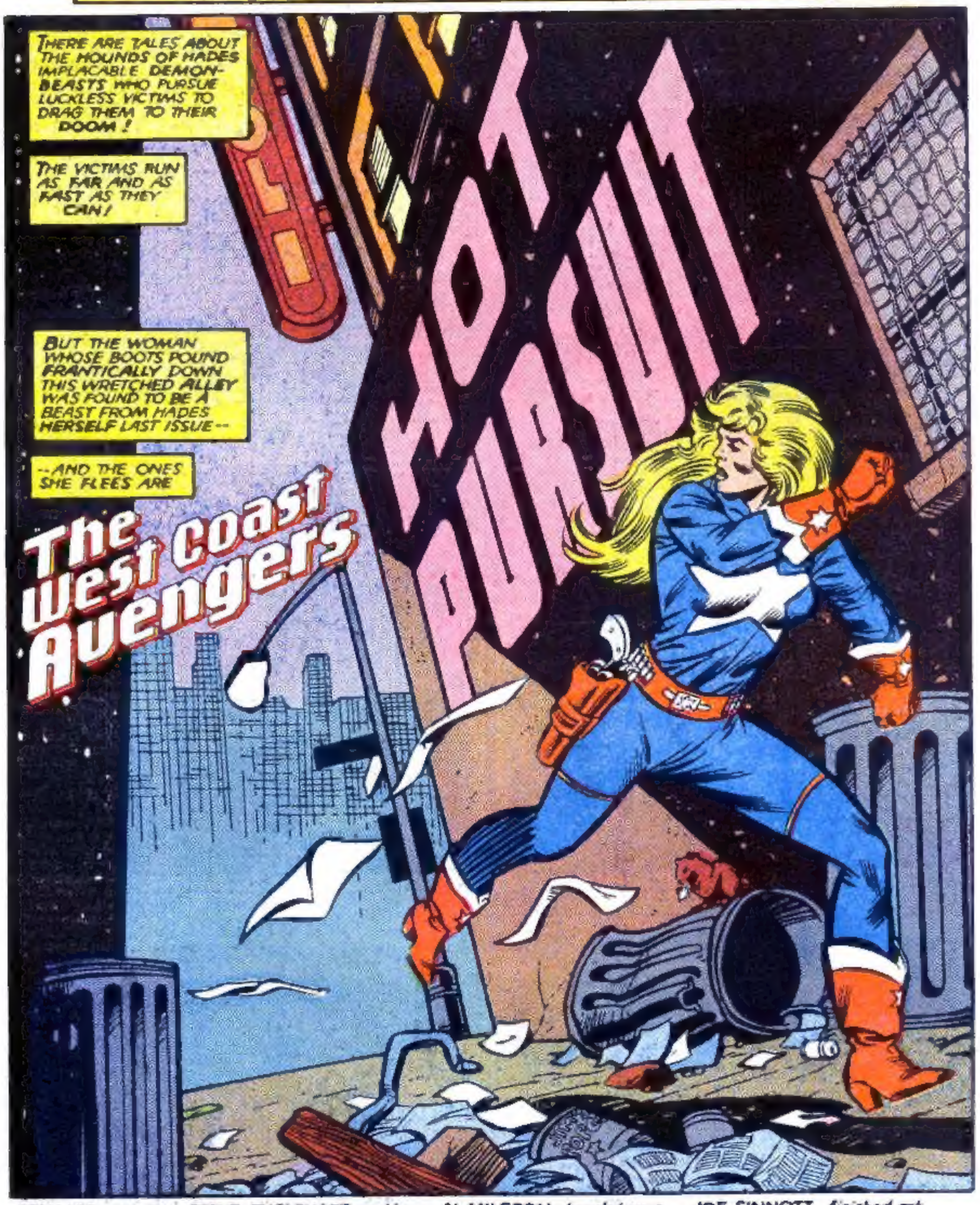
The West Coast Avengers™

MILGROM/SINNOTT

The WEST COAST AVENGERS


THERE ARE TALES ABOUT THE HOUNDS OF HADES IMPLACABLE DEMON-BEASTS WHO PURSUE LUCKLESS VICTIMS TO DRAG THEM TO THEIR DOOM!
THE VICTIMS RUN AS FAR AND AS FAST AS THEY CAN!
BUT THE WOMAN WHOSE BOOTS POUND FRANTICALLY DOWN THIS WRETCHED ALLEY WAS FOUND TO BE A BEAST FROM HADES HERSELF LAST ISSUE --
--AND THE ONES SHE FLEES ARE
The West Coast Avengers
HOT PURSUIT

STAN LEE *presents* STEVE ENGLEHART, *author* AL MILGROM, *breakdowns* JOE SINNOTT, *finished art*
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THEY'RE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE-- HAWKEYE'S TEAM, AND THE THING AND FIREBIRD-- WITH JUST CAUSE TO HUNT THE DEMON WHO MASQUERADED AS SHOOTING STAR!

THE RED EYES OF RATS OFFER NO SYMPATHY!

GARBAGE SLIDES BENEATH HER FEET!

THE IMAGES OF EVIL MULTIPLY LIKE MUSHROOMS IN HER MIND!

BUT SHOOTING STAR IS A TOUGH WOMAN, AND THE DEMON WITHIN HER IS TOUGHER!

IT'S JUST A LITTLE FARTHER NOW--

--TILL SHE REACHES HIM!

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, CREATURE!

BUHLIEVE ME, AH GOT HERE AS FAST AS AH POSSIBLY COULD--

--MASTER PANDEMONIUM! *

WHEN YOU DEAL WITH ME, DEMON, YOU WORK ON MY SCHEDULE, NOT YOURS!

*REMEMBER, FROM WCA #4?

GLAD TA, DEVIL-MAN-- BUT THERE WAS THIS LI'L MATTER OF ESCAPIN' THE WEST COAST AVENGERS FIRST--!

INSIDE! WE'LL TALK!

THE SMELL OF DAMP DECAY WRAPS AROUND THEM LIKE USED GAUZE--AND IN THE DEEPER DARKNESS...

I HATE YOUR KIND, DEMON-- I HATE YOU WITH ALL THE ACHE OF MY LOST SOUL--!

WAL, NICE TA MEET YEW TOO-- BUT AH AIN'T THAT KINDA GHOUL--!

YES-- MOCK ME! THE SPAWN OF EVIL MOCK EVERYTHING, DON'T THEY?

BUT YOU'RE NOT LEAVING ME TILL YOU TELL ME ALL I WANT TO KNOW!

HIS HANDS TIGHTEN THEIR HOT GRIP ON HER ARMS, CONVULSIVELY--AND ALL AT ONCE THE HANDS ARE NO LONGER HIS!

MY LIMBS ARE OTHERS OF YOUR KIND NOW! MY ARMS, MY LEGS-- ALL DEMONS, ALL SEPARATE FROM ME, THOUGH BENT TO MY WILL--!

THEY WILL STAND GUARD AS YOU AND I CONCLUDE THIS SORRY BUSINESS!

SO! LAST THINGS FIRST-- HOW DID YOU COME TO BE CAPTURED BY THE WEST COAST AVENGERS?

WAL, YUH WOULDN'T BUHLIEVE IT, BUT THAT FAHRBIRD WOMAN AKSHULLY GAVE ME A CALL--!

AND IN THE DEEPER DARKNESS, ONE GLOVED HAND SHIFTS SURREPTITIOUSLY...

THAT'S HER SIGNAL!

LET'S GO!

IT'S A SIGHT MORE AND MORE LOS ANGELINOS ARE SEEING-- THE MASSED MIGHT OF THESE HEROES WHO MADE THE NEWS FOR YEARS BACK EAST--

--AND NOW MAKE THEIR HOME IN THE WEST!

THE THING AND TIGRA--

--FIREBIRD--

--WONDER MAN--

--IRON MAN--

--AND HAWKEYE, THE MAN WHO LEADS THIS CREW!

THIS IS THE TOUGHEST MISSION I EVER WENT OUT ON, BUT IT'S GOT TO WORK!

IT'S GOT TO!

"I WOULD HAVE AVOIDED IT LIKE THE PLAGUE IF I COULD'VE, BUT ONCE FIREBIRD PUT THE ARM ON SHOOTING STAR, THE POSSESSION THE DEMON HAD EXERCISED OVER THE GHOST RIDER, RED WOLF AND THE TEXAS TWISTER ENDED--*

"-- AND THINGS GOT AWAY FROM ME!

*LAST ISSUE.

THE COWGIRL'S TIED UP WITH MASTER PANDEMONIUM! THIS IS THE BREAK WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!

YEAH-- WE'RE DOIN' GOOD, TIGRA!

LISTEN, RANGERS -- I'M NOT BIG ON ARMIES, SO HOW ABOUT LETTIN' THE WEST COAST AVENGERS HAVE FIRST SHOT AT THE GUY?

THAT'S JAKE WITH ME!

AH NEVER WANTED TO BE PART OF NO TEAM NOHOW!

NOR I-- BUT IF MY FRIENDS ARE STALKING DANGER, I CANNOT SIT IDLY BY!

STILL, I WAS HOPING FOR MORE THAN A SENSE OF DUTY WHEN I CALLED YOU, RED WOLF!

IF YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO FORM THE TEAM I DREAMED OF, I WOULD RATHER SEEK THIS VILLAIN WITH THE TEAM I KNOW!

GOOD, BONITA--WE NEVER WANTED YOU TO LEAVE US ANYWAY!

AND I'VE GOT A PLAN ON HOW TO PROCEED--!

EXCUSE ME--!

Uh YEAH, STICK WITH US, FIREBIRD! I CAN'T MAKE YOU A MEMBER BUT YOU KNOW WE WANT MASTER P. AS MUCH AS YOU AND WHEN---

AS I WAS SAYING--MY PLAN IS FOR THE FORMER S.H.I.E.L.D AGENT HERE-- NAMELY ME--TO GO UNDERCOVER AS "SHOOTING STAR"!

NOW, BOBBI--YOU HAVEN'T WORKED WITHOUT ME SINCE YOU JOINED THE AVENGERS!

SO THERE'S ANOTHER REASON TO DO IT!

"WELL, WHAT COULD I DO? A CHAIRMAN ISN'T SUPPOSED TO PLAY FAVORITES, EVEN IF HIS WIFE'S INVOLVED!

" BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I LIKED IT!

I THINK I GOT HANK* CALMED DOWN, PEOPLE-- BUT WHAT HAVE I MISSED HERE?

*HANK PYM, UPSET BY THE EVENTS OF ISSUE #7.

WAIT-- TELL ME ONCE WONDER MAN ARRIVES TO HEAR IT TOO!

LOOKS LIKE THERE'S BEEN SOME ACTION HERE, HAWK-EYE! I HOPE THERE'S SOMETHING LEFT FOR ME!

GEE--HE'S SURE PSYCHED UP THESE DAYS!

THE OLD SIMON WILLIAMS SEEMS GONE FOR GOOD!

AND WHAT ABOUT YOU, BENJY? YOU WANT IN ON THIS?

WOULDN'T MISS IT FOR THE WORLD!

GREAT!

HEY--HE JUST SAID "YES"! WITHOUT ANY OF THE USUAL GUFF ABOUT NOT JOININ' THE TEAM!

DO YOU THINK-- MAYBE I'VE WORN HIM DOWN AT LAST--?

"BUT I DIDN'T PRESS 'IM! I WAS TOO BUSY WATCHIN' BOBBI START DISGUISIN' HERSELF!

"MAKIN' SURE SHE LOOKED ALL RIGHT!"

SO YOU GOT *THIS* FAR, BOBBI-BIRD! AND HERE WE *ARE* FOR YOU!

RIVOLI

I SEE LIGHT THROUGH A CRACK IN A *DOOR*, TWO-THIRDS OF THE WAY *IN!*

I'M *WITH* YOU, SIMON!

MASTER! WEST COME COAST AVENGERS!

CURSE THEM WITH A THOUSAND NAMES! WHY MUST THEY INTRUDE UPON ME A *SECOND* TIME?

INSIDE, THEN. SATAN-SPAWN!

AND *YOU'RE* COMING WITH ME AS *WELL,* SHOOTING STAR!

THAT'S WHAT *YOU* THINK, MASTER PANDA-BEAR! THE AVENGERS--

--DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD DO WHAT-EVER YOU'RE *DOING*--!

AND AS THE SPOT ABOVE THEIR HEADS BURSTS OUTWARD--

--THE DOOR ACROSS THE ROOM BURSTS INWARD--

--TOO LATE!

WHUH! AND PEOPLE COMPLAIN ABOUT MY CEE-GARS!

I'M STILL TARGETED ON THE *RADIO BEACON*, HAWKEYE-- AND IT'S *NOT MOVING!*

KNOCK OFF THE *FIRST NAMES*, WONDER MAN! IF THEY *ARE* THAT CLOSE, PANDEMONIUM COULD BE *LISTENING!*

YOU THINK THEY'RE IN ANOTHER *DIMENSION*, TONY?

BUT YOU'D THINK THE BEACON WOULD--

OH NO!

IT'S STILL *RIGHT HERE!*

BUT THE *EVIL* AROUND US IS *DISSIPATING*, HAWKEYE! THEY'RE NOT ANYWHERE *NEARBY!*

THEN THEY'RE *GONE*--AND WE DON'T KNOW *WHERE!*

CAN *YOU* TRACK 'EM?

NO--SORRY! I JUST KNOW WHEN EVIL'S *NEAR*-- NOT WHERE IT GOES WHEN IT *HIDES!*

BUT I KNOW THE *RADIO* WAS LEFT BECAUSE *MECHANICAL OBJECTS* AREN'T AFFECTED BY HIS *SPELL!*

WHAT CAN WE *DO*, THEN?

IT'S TIMES LIKE THIS I ENVY THE OLD *DEFENDERS*, WITH THEIR *Dr. STRANGE!*

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU MISSED OUR TRIP TO THE *CAT-PEOPLE'S LAND*, IRON MAN! *

*WCA #6.

WHAT DID I MISS?

YOU MISSED MAKING CONTACT WITH OUR *FAMILIAR!*

FAMILIAR--?

THE *BALKATAR*, WONDER MAN!

BALKATAR-- I'VE GOT A *JOB* FOR YOU!

MEANWHILE, ELSEWHERE...

Oh BOY! JUST THE KIND OF PLACE I WAS HOPING TO *RETIRE* TO SOMEDAY!

SO, uh-- THIS IS YORE *HIDEOUT*, DEMON-MASTER?

NO, STAR-- NONE OF *YOUR KIND* VISITS MY "*HIDEOUT*"!

THIS IS JUST-- A PLACE I *ENJOY*!

BUT I DON'T ENJOY THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE *AVENGERS*! I'M *ALREADY* DARING *SO MUCH*-- AND YOU'D THINK THEY'D HAVE LEARNED THEIR *LESSON* THE *FIRST TIME*!

JUST KEEP *RAVING*, MASTER SCREWTOP! I'M SURE THE AVENGERS ARE ON THEIR *WAY*--

--*SOMEHOW*! I'M *SURE*!

WELL, IF I *MUST* DEFEAT THEM ONCE AND FOR ALL, I *WILL*! I *HATE* WHAT FATE MAKES ME *DO*--

-- BUT I *WILL* NOT BE *STOPPED*!

I AM *PANDEMONIUM*, STAR-- IT MEANS "THE ABODE OF ALL THE *DEMONS*"! *LEGIONS* SWARM AT MY COMMAND--

--AND THE SINGLE *OBSTACLE* TO MY WILL WAS LONG SINCE DELIVERED INTO MY *HANDS*!

--OR WHAT I *USE* FOR HANDS--!

THAT'S ONE O' THEM *OMELETS*, huh?

IT'S THE *AMULET OF AZMODEUS*, YOU STUPID-!

BUT WHY SHOULD I *EXPECT* YOU TO KNOW THESE THINGS, DEMON?

LISTEN, THEN--

"I WAS *KING* OF THIS PLACE ONCE-- *HOLLYWOOD!* THE *STUDIOS!* I'D MADE MONEY ON SCREEN FOR *TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS*--

"-- AND I DIDN'T LOOK A *DAY* OVER *FORTY!*

"AND I *LIKED* BEING KING! I LIKED *EVERY SINGLE ONE* OF THE REWARDS I GOT FOR BEING THE MAN I *WAS!*

"I LIKED TO GRAB A *BOTTLE* AND DRIVE MY JAG ON THE *CANYON ROADS*--

"-- TILL I *CRASHED!*

"MY *SEATBELT* SAVED MY *LIFE!* I HUNG THERE IN A STATE OF *SHOCK*, UPSIDE-DOWN, LISTENING TO THE CREAK OF *SETTLING METAL*--

"-- AND BEING *ALIVE*, I *LAUGHED!*

"TILL I SAW THAT MY *ARM* HAD BEEN *RIPPED AWAY!*

"I *SCREAMED THEN*-- SCREAMED AS THE *AGONY* KNIFED ME AND THE END OF MY *CAREER* CLAWED MY *THROAT*--

"-- AND I GOT AN *ANSWER*--!

GOOD EVENING, MARTIN PRESTON! PLEASE ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF...

I KNOW WHO YOU ARE! YOU'RE THE DEVIL-- SATAN--!

MEPHISTO WILL DO ME NICELY!

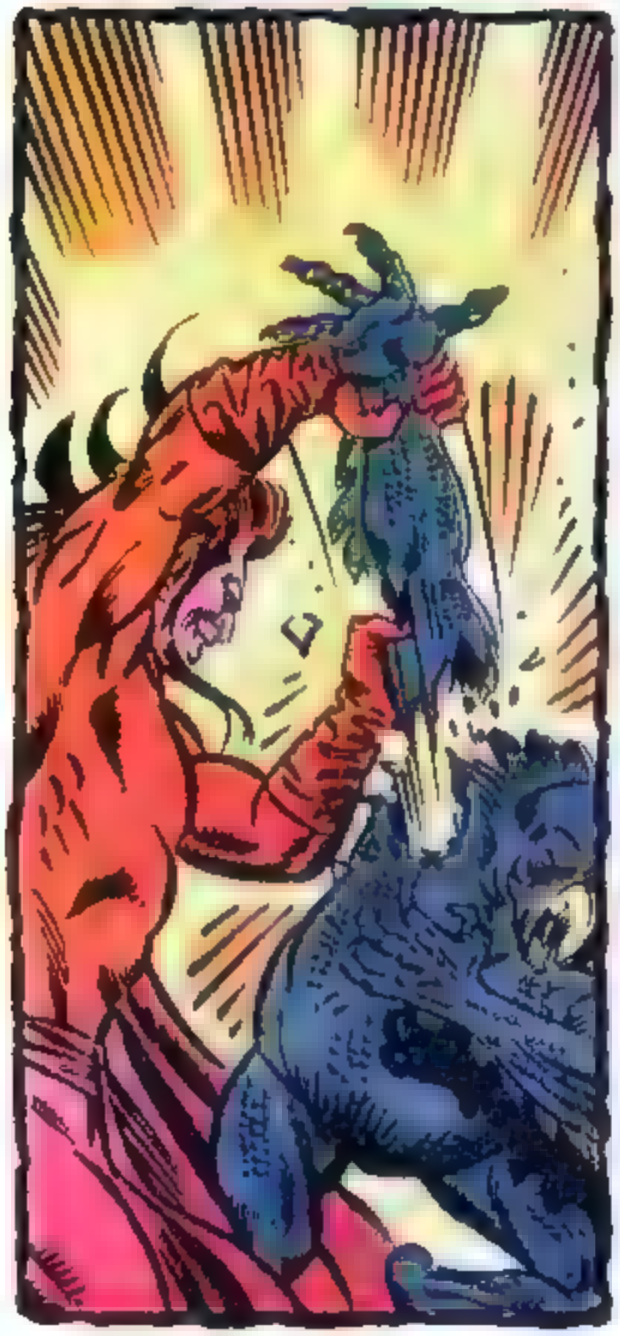
Oh PLEASE-- PLEASE-- I'LL GIVE YOU MY SOUL--ANYTHING --JUST GIVE ME BACK MY ARM--

--MY LIFE!

YOU OFFER ME YOUR SOUL? THAT MAY MEAN MUCH TO YOU, BUT I HAVE SO MANY SOULS.!

PLEASE!!

THEN LET US BE CREATIVE, AT LEAST!



WHAT-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?

YOUR ARM IS WEAK, MARTIN PRESTON! WHY PUT IT BACK, WHEN I HAVE THE POWER TO REPLACE IT ALTOGETHER--!

"I THOUGHT I'D SCREAMED BE-FORE-- BUT I HADN'T FELT--

"-- THE MERGING--!

"AND I HADN'T HEARD HIS FINAL WORDS--"

WHY STOP WITH ONE...?

THAT WAS ONLY THE *BEGINNING*, OF COURSE! I HADN'T YET HEARD OF THE *FIVE*...!

YEAH-- HE SAID HE WAS LOOKING FOR "THE FIVE" *LAST* TIME!

AH SEE NOW WHY YUH HATE, UH, MAH *MIND*, MASTER PANDEMONIUM! BUT SINCE YUH *DO*, WHY BRING ME WITH YUH?

GOT TO KEEP HIM TALKING-- HE'S UNDENIABLY *INCRED-IBLY DANGEROUS!* BUT I'M *DARNED* IF I DON'T FEEL A LITTLE *SORRY* FOR HIM!

WELL, AS BAD AS THINGS HAVE *BECOME*, I STILL RETAIN A PART OF MY *HUMANITY*-- UNLIKE YOU, DEMON!

YOU WERE TELLING ME OF YOUR TIME WITH *FIREBIRD*! I HAD FOUND TRACES OF *DEMONITRY* AROUND HER-- I THOUGHT *SHE* MIGHT BE ONE OF THE FIVE--

-- BUT WHAT IF IT WERE *YOU*?

THIS ISN'T EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED HIM TALKING ABOUT THOUGH!

COME ON, AVENGERS!

I HAVE FOUND THEM!

THEY LURK WITHIN A GREAT DARK BUILDING NUMBERED "3", SURROUNDED BY SIMILAR STRUCTURES AT THE INTERSECTION OF LAMONICA BOULEVARD AND WEST PALMETTO AVENUE!

I KNOW THAT PLACE! IT'S THE ABANDONED ANVIL PICTURES STUDIOS!

AWRIGHT! THEN WE'RE OUTTA HERE!

IT'S A GOOD THING SOME OF US HAVE SPENT TIME IN L.A.! AFTER ALL MY YEARS ON LONG ISLAND, I STILL HAVE TROUBLE FINDING MY WAY AROUND OUT HERE!

Ahh, DON'T BE ONE O' THEM NEW YORK SNOBS, SHELLHEAD! TAKE IT FROM A GUY WHO GREW UP ON YANCY STREET--L.A.'S GOT L.I. BEAT HANDS DOWN!

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M HEARIN' THIS! BEN SOUNDS LIKE HE'S ALREADY AN AVENGER!

AS SOON AS WE RESCUE BOBBI, I'M JUMPIN' ALL OVER THIS!

I'LL RACE YOU, IRON MAN!

TIGRA-- I'M VERY PROUD OF YOU. THE FIERCE WAY YOU'VE ATTACKED THE PROBLEM OF MASTER PANDEMONIUM!

I DON'T HAVE HIM IN MY CLUTCHES YET!

AND I WAS HOPING YOU'D KILL HIM WHEN YOU FOUND HIM, BALKATAR! THAT WOULD HAVE GOTTEN ME OFF THE HOOK NICELY!

THE HUMAN SIDE OF YOU HASN'T DULLED YOUR KILLER INSTINCT!

BUT IT'S ME YOUR KING WANTS TO TEST--!

HOP ON THERE, TIGRA-- WE GOT SOME CLOBBERIN' TA GET TO!

YOU WHACKOS* ARE WHACKO, BUT THERE AIN'T BEEN A DULL MOMENT SINCE I HIT TOWN!

*BEN'S NAME FOR THE WEST COAST AVENGERS.

THE FLIGHT ACROSS THE HILLS TAKES LESS THAN A MINUTE AND A HALF!

YES! THE EVIL IS STRONG HERE!

IF YOU EVER SAW ANY OF THE HORROR FLICKS ANVIL MADE, YOU'D KNOW HOW FUNNY THAT SOUNDS!

BUT THEY STOPPED MAKIN' 'EM TEN YEARS AGO, SO ANYBODY HERE NOW IS SOMEBODY WE WANT!

A LOT OF THIS EQUIPMENT IS NEWER THAN TEN YEARS---

IAY DE MI!

GRAB MY LEG, TIGRA! I'LL SHOOT AN ARROW--!

I'LL FLY THE THING---

NO! THE BIG FAN BLOWS US DOWN!

SAVE YOUR POPEYE IMITATIONS FOR LATER, FIREBIRD!

CAN'T YOU FIGHT THIS HURRICANE, CHICK?

IT CAUGHT US BY SURPRISE, BUT ONCE IRON MAN AND I ADJUST OUR JETS--

WOW!

--WEEE--!

WHOOMP!

WOMP!

HE'S SPLIT US UP!

BUT NOT FOR LONG! THE THREE OF US CAN BREAK OUT OF ANY ROOM!

AN' FIREBIRD CAN BURN A WAY OUT FOR THE OTHERS!

BUT--

THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN A MERE MOVIE SET! MASTER PANDEMONIUM'S EVIL HAS IMMUNIZED THE WALLS TO MY FLAME!

THEY WEREN'T BUILT BY HUMAN HANDS, EITHER! I CAN HARDLY GET A CLAWHOLD--

--LET ALONE FIND A WEAK POINT!

AND ACID WON'T EVEN MAKE A MARK!

MY REPULSOR RAYS ONLY BLAST ME BACKWARD!

THIS IS WRONG! INSANE!

I SMASHED ULTRON! I SHOULD BE ABLE TO SMASH THIS!

FACE IT, WONDY-- THIS AIN'T AS EASY AS WE THOUGHT!

IF YOU TRULY THOUGHT ME EASY PREY, YOU ADD INSULT TO INJURY, AVENGERS!

CROSS ME ONCE AND I MIGHT LET YOU LIVE, BUT CROSS ME TWICE AND YOU MUST DIE!

AW, DON'T BE CROSS, LITTLE BOY!

I SEE BOBBI! SHE'S ALL RIGHT!

WHERE ARE THE OTHER AVENGERS, PANDEMONIUM?

WHAT CAN THAT MATTER TO DEAD MEN?

EVEN IF YOU ARE AVENGERS, NONE OF YOU HAS A CHANCE OF SURVIVAL!

I'VE HAD *YEARS* TO MODIFY THE STRUCTURE OF THIS LOT TO MY LIKING! IT'S *RIDDLED* WITH *DEATHTRAPS* NOW, AND NOW I'LL SEE THEM *WORK!*

THIS MAY BE THE FIRST TIME THE *DAMSEL TIED TO THE RAILROAD TRACKS* RESCUED THE *CAVALRY*--

--BUT THERE'S THE '80's IN A *NUT-SHELL!*

YOU WILL BE INTERESTED IN THIS, SHOOTING ST---

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH *THAT?*

I'M THINKING HOW YOU TOLD ME IT CAN *SCREW YOU UP*--

--AND HOW YOU CAN'T TAKE OFF YOUR *HEAD!*

WHAM!

GO FOR IT, BOBBI!

DID SHE *HIT HIM* WITH SOMETHING? I COULDN'T *SEE!*

HE'S FALLING TOWARD THE *CAMERA--!*

IT'S *OUT!* MAYBE *HE'S* OUT!

MAGICK'S THE ONLY THING I *WORRY ABOUT*, SHELLHEAD! IF *HE'S* OUT, *WE'RE* OUT--OF THIS *BOX!*

WHO'S GONNA DO THE *HONORS?*

MY FLASH-FLAME *WORKS* AGAIN!

COME, TIGRA-- LEAP THROUGH THE *BURNING HOOP!*

WHAAT--?

AFTER YOU, BIG GUY! YOU'RE ON OUR *RUSH LIST*, AFTER ALL--!

HAR HAR HAR! THANKS, GUYS-- I USU'LLY HAVE TO DO THIS FOR *EVERYBODY ELSE!*

YOU CAN PICK UP THE *NEXT* ROUND!

LIKE-- RIGHT NOW!

IT'S THAT ARMY OF DEMONS PANDEMONIUM'S GOT!

YUCCH! I FORGOT HOW UGLY THEY WERE!

UGLY-- AN' MISSHAPEN!

HE SOUNDS BITTER ALL OF A SUDDEN! BECAUSE HE'S MISSHAPEN?

I'D HAVE THOUGHT HE'D HAVE ADJUSTED TO THAT BY NOW!

WHUM!

WELL, I'LL DO MY SHARE TO WIPE OUT MONSTERS!

HEY, WONDY-- I LIKE THIS NEW PIZAZZ ON YER PART! IT BECOMES YA!

I LIKE IT TOO, THING! AND THE LONGER I LET MYSELF EXPAND INTO MY POWERS--

-- THE BETTER I LIKE IT!

YOU SOUND LIKE ME WHEN I WAS JUST STARTING OUT, WONDY! YOU NEVER DID WHEN YOU REALLY WERE STARTING OUT!

WELCOME TO THE AVENGERS, BUDDY!

IRON MAN, WONDER MAN, AN' ME! THIS IS GREAT STUFF!

DOES IT MEAN WE'RE WELCOMING YOU TO THE RANKS AS WELL, BIG GUY?

I AIN'T TALKIN'-- AT LEAST, TILL WE GET DONE WITH CLOBBERIN' TIME!

RIGHT! MOCKING-BIRD SAVED US-- NOW WE'VE GOT TO SAVE HER!

ONE THING ABOUT MY POWER-- IT GROWS STRONGER THE MORE EVIL I FACE!

CAN'T YOU TALK ABOUT ANYTHING BESIDES EVIL?

WHAT DOES MORALITY MATTER WHEN YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE?

THAT'S A FUNNY THING FOR AN AVENGER TO SAY, TIGRA!

WHEN ONE GIVES HERSELF OVER TO GOD, ONE DOES HIS WORK AT ALL TIMES, TIGRA!

MORALITY IS LIFE!

GIVE ME A BREAK! I HAPPEN TO BELIEVE IN GOD MYSELF, BUT LIFE IS FOR LIVING, NOT FOR SERVING!

WHY DON'T YOU JUST LET YOUR INSTINCTS TAKE OVER SOMETIME?

BECAUSE MAN WAS GIVEN THE ABILITY TO REASON-- UNLIKE CATS!

UH, SAY, LADIES, COULDN'T WE SWITCH TO POLITICS OR ETHNIC JOKES? WE MAY HAVE FIREBIRD AND MOCKINGBIRD AROUND HERE, BUT THIS ISN'T THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS!

THIS IS "LET'S MAKE A DEMON!"

--AND IT'S PLAYIN' TOO *SLOW!* WE DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT'S HAPPENIN' TO *MOCKY*--

--SO LET'S TAKE A *CHANCE!*

IF I DON'T BRING DOWN THE *WHOLE WALL* ON THESE SLEAZEBALLS, I'VE USED UP THREE *HEAVY-DUTY ARROWS* FOR *NO REASON*--

--BUT IF I DO-- WE'RE *ON OUR WAY!*

PSSPSSPSS!

A *WHISPER*-- JUST AUDIBLE TO MY *CAT'S EARS*--!

BALKATAR!

THIS WAY!

WHILE THE OTHERS ARE FINDING THEIR WAY TO PANDEMONIUM'S LAIR, I GIVE *YOU* A MORE *DIRECT* ROUTE I SNIFFED OUT!

AT LAST YOUR TIME HAS *COME*, NOBLE TIGRA! BRING US HIS *BLOOD!*

YES-- NOW I HAVE TO *DECIDE*--

--WITH MY *REASON*-- AND MY *INSTINCTS!*

BUT WHILE ALL THIS HAS BEEN GOING ON, WHAT ABOUT THE TWO WHO BEGAN IT ALL?

PUT THAT AMULET DOWN, WHOEVER-YOU-ARE!

YOU'VE GOT A HARD HEAD, SCREWTOP-- BUT I DON'T! THERE'S NO WAY I'LL DROP THIS BAUBLE WHILE IT SEEMS TO KEEP YOU FROM RELEASING THE DEMONS INSIDE YOU!

I DON'T NEED DEMONS TO CONQUER A LONE WOMAN SPY!

YOU SAY "SPY" LIKE IT'S A DIRTY WORD--

--BUT I'M PROUD TO BE A FORMER S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENT!

MOCKING-BIRD'S MY CODE-NAME--

--AND AFTER ADDING THE WAYS OF KA-ZAR'S JUNGLE TO S.H.I.E.L.D.'S COMBAT REPERTOIRE,* I CAN EVEN GIVE CAPTAIN AMERICA A GOOD FIGHT!

*BEGINNING IN ASTONISHING TALES #8.

AGAINST ME, YOU NEED YOUR DEMONS BADLY!

ESPECIALLY AFTER I FOUND OUT WHAT YOU ARE AT LAST!

BUT THERE'S MUCH YOU DON'T YET KNOW! FOR EXAMPLE, PUTTING YOUR FOOT THROUGH THE HOLE IN MY TORSO WON'T HURT ME--

--AND WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN KILL YOU!

I ONLY NEED TO KNOW ONE THING--

--THIS, BUD, IS NOT FOR YOU!

NOW, I'LL TAKE YOUR ARM OFF THIS TIME IF YOU DON'T LIE STILL!

YOU'RE FORMIDABLE WHEN YOU'VE GOT YOUR MAGICK--

--BUT ONCE YOU LET ME INSIDE YOUR DEFENSES, YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY TO DEFEAT!

LET'S JUST HOPE YOU DIDN'T HURT HAWKEYE--

--OR ANY OF MY OTHER FRIENDS---

WHAM!

PLOW!

UNNNHH!

CLUNK!

OKAY, PANDEMONIUM-- LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH!

I'VE GOT TO KILL YOU, AND I DON'T WANT ANY OF THOSE FRIENDS WALKING IN ON US!

THE AMULET OF AZMODEUS-- SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT IT'S FOR! IF I CAN GET TO IT...!

YOU WANT TO KILL ME, AVENGER?

NO, I DON'T *WANT* TO-- BUT I *HAVE* TO IF I WANT MY *SOUL* BACK ALL TO *ITSELF!*

AND NOW THAT I'VE MADE THAT *RATIONAL DECISION*, I CAN LET MY *INSTINCTS* TAKE OVER-- THE INSTINCTS OF A *CAT* WITH A *MOUSE!*

YOU TALK IN *RIDDLES*, CAT-WOMAN! AND WHO ARE YOU TO TALK *AT ALL* ABOUT *LOST SOULS?*

WHO *AM I?*

I'M SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN THROUGH TORTURE EVEN *YOU* CAN'T IMAGINE --BUT NOT BECAUSE I *LOST* A SOUL!

I'VE *GAINED* ONE, AND IT'S *ONE TOO MANY!*

BUT IT'S *NOT MINE*, AND THAT'S THE ONLY ONE I *CARE* ABOUT!

WHA--? YOU *MISSED* ME!

I WASN'T *AIMING* FOR YOU!

I WAS AIMING FOR *THIS!*

AND NOW THAT I *HAVE* IT-- I USE IT TO *ESCAPE!*

NO! YOU CAN'T *DO* THAT!

I'M READY TO *KILL* YOU! THIS ISN'T *FAIR!*

Oh, YOU'LL MEET ME *AGAIN*, TIGRA--

--IN THE *DARK*, WHEN YOU LEAST *EXPECT* IT!

RRRARR

Ohhhh...

MOCKINGBIRD--!

I GUESS YOU *SAVED* ME, TIGRA! WHAT WAS IT *HIT* ME-- ONE OF HIS *DEMON HORDES* FROM THE *TRAP* HE HAD YOU IN?

Uh-- I GUESS IT *MUST HAVE BEEN!* I JUST GOT HERE *MYSELF!*

SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO-- BUT *I* DO NOW--!

BLAM!

NUTS! THE MAZE HE BUILT DOWN THERE KEPT US TIED UP TOO LONG!

YES-- THE EVIL DIES AWAY--!

BUT HOW DID YOU GET HERE, TIGRA?

NOW DON'T START FIGHTING AGAIN, FIREBIRD!

NOT WHEN WE'RE FINALLY ALL BACK TOGETHER!

HOW'RE YOU DOIN', BOBBI-BIRD? HE DIDN'T HURT YOU, DID HE?

JUST MY PRIDE, SPORT! I WAS TELLING HIM HOW ACCOMPLISHED A CRIME-FIGHTER I WAS WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT OUT!

BUT WE GET CLOSER TO CATCHING HIM EVERY TIME!

SURE! WE'RE YOUNG YET! BUT RIGHT NOW, I'M JUST SO GLAD--!

I'M GLAD YOU'RE GLAD, GRAPE-FACE!

AW, YA STOLE MY LINE, MOCKINGBIRD!

NOT TA MENTION MY BIG SCENE, WHERE I TELL THE PURPLE-PUSSED POLECAT THAT I'M READY TA STOP FREELOADIN' ON YOUR GUYS' CASES!

BENJY, ARE YOU REALLY SAYIN' WHAT I'VE BEEN THINKIN' YOU WERE GONNA SAY?

HUH?

ARE YOU GONNA BE AN AVENGER?

YEAH!

"YEAH," HE SAID! A WORD TO LIVE IN HISTORY!

WE'VE GOT OUR SIXTH MEMBER!

I'M SO GLAD, BEN!

IF ONLY FIREBIRD DIDN'T HAVE TO BE PASSED OVER FOR IT--!

SO-- SOMETHING GOOD COMES OUT OF ALL THIS!

CONGRATULATIONS, BIG GUY! YOU'RE FINALLY GOING TO AMOUNT TO SOMETHING!

AND NOW OUR TEAM IS COMPLETE!

BUT THEN, WHY IS OUR NEXT ISSUE CALLED--

THE SEARCH FOR THE THING!

DON'T YOU DARE MISS IT!